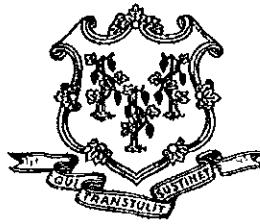


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March 13, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Holder-Winfield, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. I am here to testify in support of S.B. 371 AN ACT CONCERNING RETALIATION AGAINST IMMIGRANT WORKERS and H.B. 5527 AN ACT CONCERNING A DOMESTIC WORKERS BILL OF RIGHTS. These two bills would ensure that immigrant workers and domestic workers are treated fairly by employers in our state.

S.B. No. 371 would prevent an employer from engaging in unfair immigration-related practices as retribution for an individual exercising his or her rights under state employment law. This bill would discourage unethical employers from violating laws such as minimum wage and maximum hours standards in the belief that employees can be intimidated into not reporting these violations. The problem of workplace violations is particularly acute in service industries such as health care, child care, food services, and day labor. This legislation would assist in the effort to bring these violations out of the shadows and into the daylight. Often workers in these industries are paid low wages and work in unsafe workplaces. Those without documents are often excluded from the protection of core labor laws. This structural exclusion, coupled with lax labor law enforcement, undermines the economic security of all workers. We must not allow immigration status to be used as a tool to abuse employees.

H.B. No. 5527 AN ACT CONCERNING A DOMESTIC WORKERS BILL OF RIGHTS would establish certain requirements for the employment of domestic workers in the state. Under current law domestic services workers are excluded from many basic protections that apply to workers in other industries; this can lead to abuse of these workers and limit their options to respond to the abuse. There are approximately 40,000 domestic service workers in Connecticut who serve as housekeepers, nannies, and caregivers in private homes. The majority of these workers are women and many are immigrants; they are often the primary wage earners for their families. Despite the crucial nature of their work, domestic workers receive wages well below the poverty line. The protections in this legislation would include: coverage of domestic workers under state minimum wage and overtime law, protection for on-the-job injuries, protection from harassment and discrimination, and creation of industry-specific workplace protections including: 7 paid days of annual leave, one day off per seven calendar days, advance notice of termination, written notice of duties and pay at the time of hire, guarantee of sleep time for live-in workers, a right to privacy in living spaces, and a right of action with an enforcement mechanism.

Taken together these two bills would improve working conditions for many workers in our state who have been left out of basic labor law protections for far too long. Thank you for raising these important bills.